

Direct Technical Mentoring
Lawrence Street Brownfield Area-wide Planning Grant
Groundwork Hudson Valley
Yonkers, New York

Groundwork Hudson Valley (HV) is an organization that engages local businesses, residents and government officials to revitalize neighborhoods and transform community liabilities into community assets. Groundwork HV was awarded an EPA Area-wide Brownfields Planning Grant for one of the hardest hit neighborhoods in the New York region. The area known locally as the Lawrence Street Neighborhood in Yonkers, NY has the highest crime rate in the City of Yonkers, the second highest rate of poverty, thousands of under-skilled youth that make up nearly half of the population, and among the highest percentage of people born outside of the United States in the region.

Running directly through the Lawrence Street neighborhood is the abandoned Getty Square branch railroad right of way (ROW), a contiguous series of vacant and contaminated properties. These constitute the catalyst brownfield sites for the area-wide planning. The railroad ROW's reuse as a trail is the central idea around which neighborhood revitalization would be planned.



Getty Square Branch RR ROW, Yonkers, NY

Groundwork HV requested NJIT TAB assistance for a number of tasks in support of the Lawrence Street area-wide brownfield planning grant. NJIT TAB conducted preliminary grant activities that provided a foundation for advancing the grant requirements.

Development of Mapping

NJIT TAB prepared a series of maps for Groundwork HV that they could use for stakeholder meetings, community workshops, grant applications, and requests for proposals. The maps included: a base map of the entire rail ROW area; a map indicating the location of the rail ROW; a base map of the Lawrence Street Neighborhood; and a map depicting the Lawrence Street Neighborhood land uses.

Photo Documentation of the Rail Right of Way

NJIT TAB conducted a field visit of the entire length of the rail ROW and took photographs of key locations and situations. NJIT TAB prepared a photo log locating each photo on a base map prepared by NJIT TAB. Groundwork HV used this photo log in a grant application for the rail to trail feasibility study.

Development of a Scope of Work for a Trail Feasibility Study

NJIT TAB prepared a rail to trail feasibility assessment scope of work and an estimated cost for the assessment. Groundwork HV used this scope of work and cost estimate in a grant application for the funding, as well as in an RFP to secure a consultant. NJIT TAB also conducted research on firms that are experienced in conducting rail to trail feasibility studies and provided a list of firms to Groundwork HV. With this scope of work and cost estimate, Groundwork HV successfully obtained a grant to conduct a rail to trail feasibility study.

Conduct of a Brownfields 101 Workshop

NJIT TAB prepared and conducted a Brownfields 101 Workshop for the Lawrence Street Neighborhood Steering Committee. NJIT TAB's presentation included: a discussion of the history of industrialization and how that has led to brownfields; the definition of brownfields; a brief overview of the brownfield assessment, remediation and redevelopment processes; and examples of brownfields that have been successfully redeveloped.

Research on other Rail to Trail Projects

NJIT TAB conducted research to identify several locations in the NY/NJ/CT/PA area in which former rail ROWs were successfully remediated and redeveloped for trails/parks/open space/community center end uses. The purpose of this research was to identify sites that the Lawrence Street Neighborhood Steering Committee could visit and see the possibilities for their neighborhood's rail to trail project. Of all the sites NJIT TAB identified, Groundwork HV chose the Highline in New York City. NJIT TAB conducted more in depth research on the HighLine including the site's history, the brownfield remediation process, and the activities undertaken to create this elevated, linear park.

Conduct of a Steering Committee Field Trip

NJIT TAB conducted a field visit of the Highline in New York City with the Lawrence Street Neighborhood Steering Committee. NJIT TAB provided an overview of the site history, brownfield remediation activities, and how the Highline came to be.

Development of a Community Participation Process

NJIT TAB developed a community participation process as part of Groundwork HV's area-wide planning grant work. NJIT TAB developed exercises to be conducted at the Steering Committee, business community, and community at large meetings for the purpose of identifying the key community priorities for the neighborhood.

Assistance with the Consultant Selection Process

NJIT TAB developed a strategy for Groundwork HV to secure a consultant to prepare the brownfields area-wide plan. NJIT TAB researched and then provided Groundwork HV with area-wide plans prepared for other locations. NJIT TAB developed a detailed scope of work and a Request for Proposal for Groundwork HV's use in securing a consultant. With this RFP, Groundwork HV conducted a consultant selection process, hired a consultant, and began the area-wide planning effort.



Sean Vroom, NJIT TAB Project Manager gives a tour of NYC's High Line to the City of Yonkers Area Wide Planning Grant Steering Committee.

NJIT TAB Highline field trip, NY, NY